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TO A LADY IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM READING ROOM

I

What are you doing there mid the dust,
You that are made of the sunlight and
dew?

What are you doing?
Reading? Reviewing?

Wearing out eyes of cerulean blue,
Wasting a heart that the whole world is
wooing,
Gracious, and winsome, and tender, and
true?

What are you doing?
Reading? Reviewing?
Japanese? Volapuk? German? Yahoo?

II

What are you studying? Science? Phi-
losophy?

Botany? Cookery? History? Art?

Have you been choosing
Something amusing,

Fin de Siècle, and piquant, and smart?
Are you a sonnet or sermon perusing?
Feed you your mind, or your soul, or your
heart?

Have you been choosing
Something amusing?
Is it Corelli, or is it Descartes?

III

Are you the goddess Pallas Athene,
Goddess of wisdom, stately and wise?

Have you I wonder,
Lightning and thunder
Stored in your bosom and hid in your
eyes?
Out of the brow of great Zeus cleft
asunder

Did you one morning with shouting arise?
Have you I wonder
Lightning and thunder?
Are you a goddess come down from the
skies?

IV

Fair necromancer, with your warm
beauty,

You can awaken the dead, and the dumb,

Fair necromancer,
Soldier, and dancer,

Step to your heart like the beat of a drum.

Emperor, mandarin, singer, romancer,

Talk till the whole of the galleries hum.

Fair necromancer,
Singer, and dancer,

Poet and priest at your beckoning come.

V

By your warm spirit bewitched and
awakened,

All the dead hearts of the universe leap.

Lo, with a holloa,

Pan and Apollo

Rise from Time's oubliette dusky and
deep.

Odin, and Thor, and Euridice follow;

And yonder is Tityrus tending his sheep.

Lo with a holloa,

Pan and Apollo,

Odin, and Isis arise from their sleep!

VI

Dozens of amorous, passionate poets

Dance to your heart on the dusty old
shelves.

Out of the pages,
Brown with the ages,

March mighty warriors gripping their
helves,
Teachers, and preachers, and singers, and
sages,
And commonplace people the same as
ourselves.

Out of the pages,
Brown with the ages,
Flutter forth fairies, and pixies, and elves.

VII

O how they love you! Prophet, and
preacher,
Warrior, novelist, fairy, and king,
Builder and hewer,
Dreamer and doer,
Forth from the books and the manu-
scripts spring,

Every wise heart of the past is your
wooer;
Poets, philosophers clamour and sing,
Hero, and hewer,
Dreamer, and doer,
All to your beauty their homage would
bring.

VIII

Lady, fair lady, haply some morning
As you bend over some wonderful scroll,
You will discover
Lips of a lover
Singing a ditty and craving a dole;
Some day around you Cupid will hover
Stringing his bow, and requesting a toll—
You will discover
A beautiful lover
Kissing your lips and besieging your soul.

RONALD CAMPBELL MACFIE.

From The London Graphic.